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THE WONDERS OF THREAD

**A Gift of Textiles
from the Collection of
Elizabeth Gordon**

COOPER UNION MUSEUM



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The Wonders of Thread

A GIFT OF TEXTILES FROM
THE COLLECTION OF ELIZABETH GORDON

*Exhibition December 12, 1964
through February 23, 1965*



Cooper Union Museum Third Avenue at Seventh Street, New York

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Cover: Detail of RED CROCUS, No. 10

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Introduction

An interest in the multitudinous ways that thread can be manipulated is almost as rewarding as an interest in food. But textiles have an edge. They are as consumable as food but, unlike food, they can be preserved intact so they can be sampled again and again for years.

You use textiles in all aspects of life. You wear them, or sleep under them. You hang them on the wall as ornament, or use them to temper the light from windows. You walk on them, sit on them, wipe your lips with them at meal time.

They can be mundane (as everyone knows) but they can also be electric in the way they can stimulate you—intellectually, emotionally, tactily. Becoming aware of textiles as more than mundane necessities can add a whole new dimension to your daily life. To pursue the better versions in the many categories is fun and aesthetically rewarding.

Quite apart from the pleasures that derive from daily use, there are other pleasures that accrue from the way they can open up your cultural understanding. When you get really interested in textiles, you start noticing how differently different cultures manipulate thread and color. From the textiles of a country (or ethnic region or historical epoch) you can deduce the kind and type of civilization that produced them. This is why historians rank textiles, as illuminating instruments, alongside the written documents of a culture.

Even in contemporary times, the currently-produced textiles of a country can be expressive of a yeastiness of growth and development not being recorded by political news or social commentary. They are excellent indicators of the metabolic health of the technical and artistic aspects of a society.

I hope that this small part of my collection, shown here, will give you the impetus to start investigating this area of life for yourself. Even though it is generally ignored by art critics and art scholars, this makes it more fun for you to forge ahead. For you will not meet with an “Establishment” which has already written the rules about who is IN and who is OUT. Nothing but your own good sense and artistic awareness need be your guide.

ELIZABETH GORDON

The gift by Elizabeth Gordon of textiles from her collection is of significant interest to the Museum, for it includes excellent works in areas in which the Museum's collections have needed the addition of strong examples.

In a visually exciting group of weaving and needlework of the 20th century the debt of today's artists to the technology of other times is apparent. But more important, the special expression of the style of our own time is here represented by innovations in material, by color choices, by arrangements of spatial distribution, by scale and, in a number of cases, by the creation of textiles as a pure art form.

The textiles in another group, primarily Japanese and from various periods, stress technical refinement. Evident in most of these examples is the elegant understatement, so coveted by the Japanese people, where design, technique and texture have been consciously concealed only in order to be discovered by the discerning.

The sensibilities of Elizabeth Gordon have been touched both by skill of technique and by artistry of design in the production of textiles. She has responded to the appeal of superior craftsmanship and of artistic merit by acquiring these textiles for her own enjoyment. It is the pleasure of the Museum now to be able to show these works to the public as a result of Elizabeth Gordon's generous wish to share them.

CHRISTIAN ROHLFING

Catalogue of the Exhibition



No. 3

EVA ANTILA (*Finland*)

1. Hanging, FINNISH FOREST

Wool and novelty yarn, tapestry weave in shades of brown and other colors. 1952.

1964-24-45

2. Hanging, THUMBELINE

Wool, synthetic fibers and novelty yarn, tapestry weave in pale shades of blue, violet and green with additional colors. 1948.

1964-24-46

3. Hanging, PROFILES*

Wool, synthetic fibers and novelty yarn, tapestry weave in white, red, pink, green, violet and other colors. 1952.

1964-24-47

4. Hanging, EVENING

Wool and novelty yarn, tapestry weave in violet, pink, yellow, blue, orange, grey and brown. 1949.

1964-24-48

5. Hanging, FLOWERED CLIFF

Wool and novelty yarn, tapestry weave in green, violet, pink, blue, yellow, brown, orange and white. 1951.

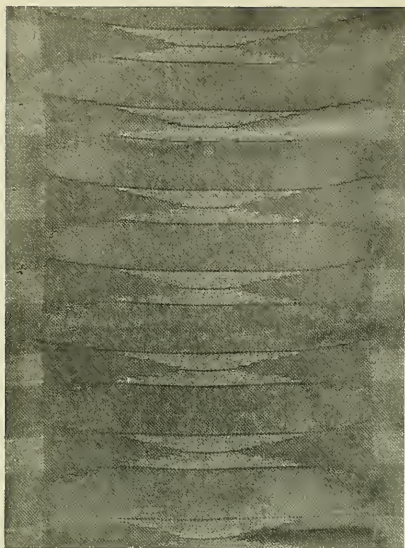
1964-24-49

6. Hanging, THE WHITE VEIL

Wool and synthetic fibers, tapestry weave in pale shades of pink, blue, orange and brown. 1950.

1964-24-83

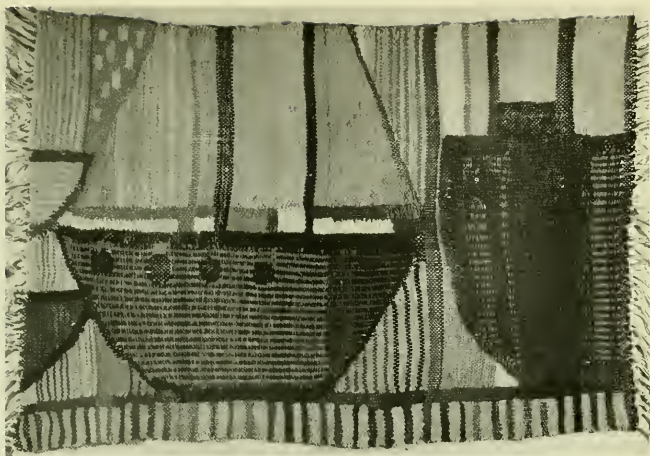
* illustrated



No. 7



No. 9 (detail)



No. 11

HELEN ENGELBERT (Norway)

7. Table runner*

Linen damask in yellow, grey and white. 1950-1960.

1964-24-53

8. Tray cloth

Linen damask in grey and white. 1950-1960.

1964-24-61

MÄRTA MÅÅS FJETERSTRÖM (Sweden)

9. Rug*

Various colored wools in tapestry weave. 1937.

1964-24-62

ANN-MARI FORSBERG (Sweden)

10. Hanging, RED CROCUS*

Wool and linen, tapestry weave in red, violet, white, green, orange, grey and brown. 1950-1960. 1964-24-41

VIOLA GRÅSTEN (Sweden)

11. Hanging, TWO SHIPS*

Wool and linen, slit tapestry weave in red, dark blue, yellow, pink and shades of grey. 1951. 1964-24-50

DORA JUNG (Finland)

12. Hanging, DOVES

Linen damask in grey, white, and spotted areas in various colors. About 1958. 1964-24-54

13. Table cloth and napkin

Linen damask in dark and light brown. About 1956.

1964-24-55 A and B

14. Table mat

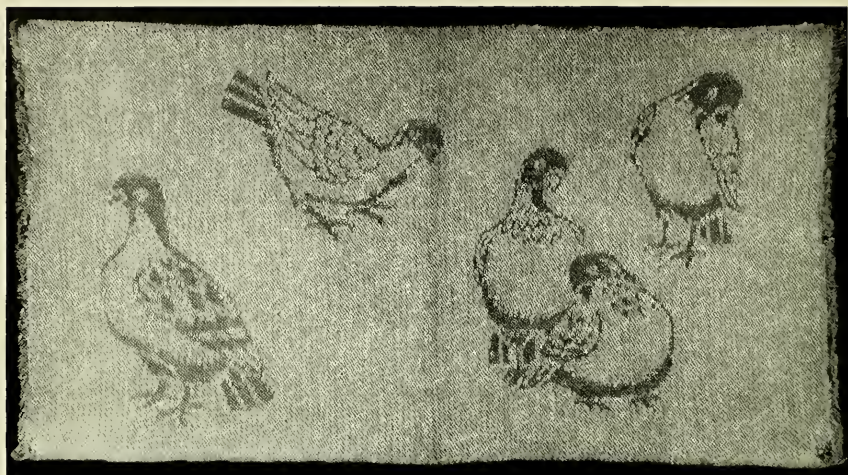
Linen damask in black and grey. About 1954.

1964-24-56

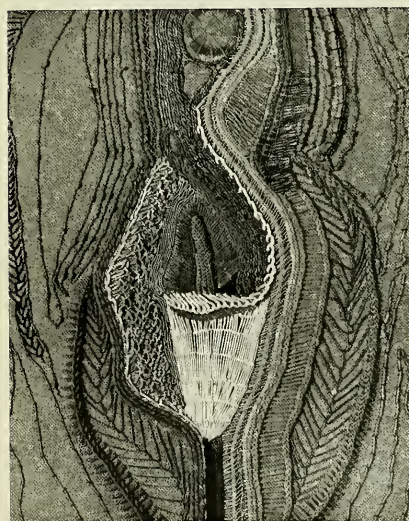
15. Table cloth and napkin

Linen damask in black and grey. About 1956.

1964-24-57 A and B



No. 17



No. 22

16. Table mat and napkin

Linen damask in cream color and white. About 1950.
1964-24-58 *A and B*

17. Tray cloth, *BIRDS**

Linen damask in white and light brown. About 1947.
1964-24-59

18. Tray cloth, *GIRLS AND CATS*

Linen damask in white and light brown. About 1947-1948.
1964-24-60

MARISKA KARASZ (*United States*)19. Hanging, *FIELDS FROM THE AIR*

Natural color linen, embroidered with wools and other heavy yarns, in shades of green, brown, grey and white; abstract pattern of leaves. 1950-1953.
1964-24-39

20. Hanging, *COMPOSITION IN SQUARES*

Grey-green linen, embroidered in various colored yarns, string, cord and couched tape, in white and pale shades of yellow, green and orange. 1950-1953.
1964-24-36

21. Hooked rug, companion piece to number 20, *COMPOSITION IN SQUARES*, repeating pattern and color scheme. Made by Edward Fields. 1950-1953.
1964-24-37

22. Panel, *CALLA LILY**

Cream color silk embroidered in cotton, silk and wool yarns of various weights, in white and shades of yellow, green, brown and grey. 1951.
1964-24-38

23. Hanging, *EXERCISE IN ABSTRACTION*

Brown linen embroidered in wools and metallic and other threads, in shades of brown, red, green and grey; geometric pattern. 1950-1953.
1964-24-40

24. Stole

Light blue cotton, the ends embroidered with various yarns, in shades of blue, brown and white; pattern of freely designed feathers. 1953.
1964-35-12

25. Panel

Pale blue wool and silk, embroidered in wool, chenille and metal in light shades of green, blue, grey and white; abstract pattern incorporating letters in white, *ELIZABETH*; in corner, *LOVE* mk. 1954.
1964-35-13

26. Pillow cover

Blue linen, embroidered in white string in pattern of circular loops. Fringed on four sides. 1952.
1964-35-10

27. Pillow cover

Blue linen, embroidered in light blue and white string in net effect. Fringed on four sides. 1952.
1964-35-9

28. Panel, *FEATHERS*

Linen embroidered in various colored wools; freely designed feather pattern. 1952.
1964-35-14

29. Place mat and napkin

Brown linen embroidered in white cotton and linen; wheat motif. 1952.
1964-35-16 *A and B*

30. Place mat

Cream color linen, appliqué pattern of green, gold and red braid and corner squares worked with metallic thread of green and red. Napkin of natural color linen, with similar corner design in squares. 1952.
1964-35-19 *A and B*

31. Place mat

Light brown silk, with applied twist of straw, wound with gold, in meandering pattern, and edged with gold braid. 1952.
1964-35-20

32. Place mat

Grey Italian straw, with couched silver cord in meandering pattern; design of circles enclosing stars. 1952.
1964-35-21

33. Place mat

Brown cotton, with applied design in white shell pattern, and worked in white and brown cotton. Napkin of white cotton embroidered in shell motif in brown. 1952.
1964-35-18 *A and B*

34. Place mat

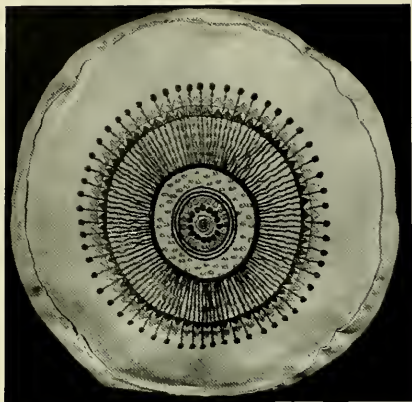
Brown cotton with applied border of white cotton, stitched on with brown cotton thread. 1952.
1964-35-17

35. Place mat

Yellow linen with appliqué pattern in colors, of fish and patches, loosely embroidered over with colored and metallic cords. 1952.
1964-35-15

36, 37. Panels, *MINNOWS IN A NET*

Natural color linen with appliqué pattern of fish and patches of various materials in colors; embroidered



No. 40

loosely over this design with colored yarns and string to simulate a net. 1952. 1964-35-7 and -8

38. Curtain

Brown filet decorated at bottom with design of MINNOWS IN A NET; appliqué pattern of fish in various colors, embroidered over in a loose stitch to simulate a net. 1952. 1964-35-6

39. In 1952, at the office of *House Beautiful*, Mariska Karasz demonstrated her ability to guide a group of people completely untrained with the needle to a quick comprehension of creative embroidery and its pleasure. Using unconventional threads and materials, and emphasizing freedom and the production of textural effects, her pupils in this experiment produced, on the theme of "The Fish," some of the examples shown here. 1964-44-1 through -6

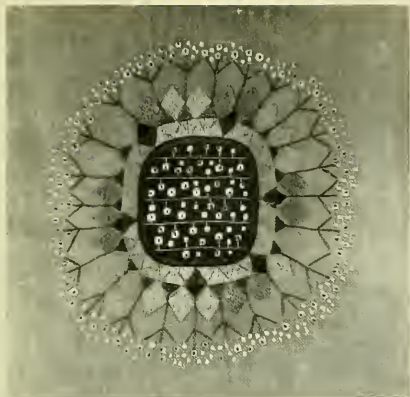
EVA KOHLMARK (Sweden)

40. Round pillow cover, DILLKRONA (Dill)*

White linen, embroidered in white and shades of green and grey; pattern of open flower head. 1950-1960. 1964-35-23



No. 41



No. 42

ANN-MARI KORNERUP (Denmark)

41. Hanging, GRANDMOTHER AND CHILDREN WITH TULIPS*

Wool, slit tapestry weave in shades of red, orange, pink, violet, grey, brown and green. 1950–1960. 1964-24-51

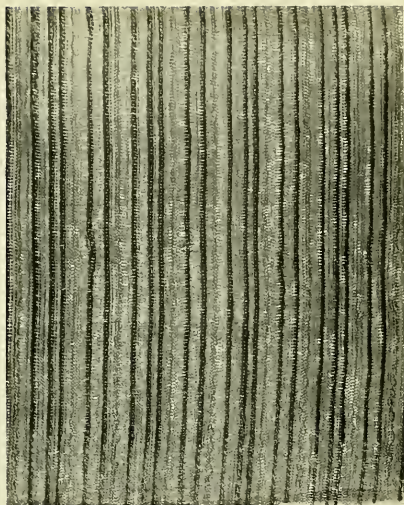
EDNA MARTIN (Sweden)

42. Round pillow cover, SOLROS (Sunflower)*
Linen, deep cream color, embroidered in shades of grey, orange and white; wheel pattern. 1950–1960.

1964-35-22

43. Square pillow cover, SALAMI
Linen, deep cream color, with centre panel of dark green linen; embroidered in white and shades of yellow, pink and grey; pattern of diamonds and stylized flower sprays. 1950–1960.

1964-35-24



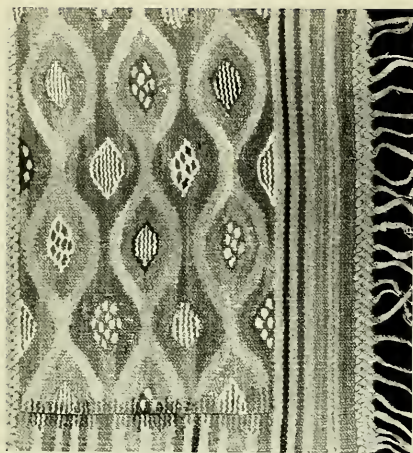
No. 45

MARJATTA METSOVAARA-NYSTRÖM (Finland)

44. Four samples of upholstery material
Linen, wool, cotton and novelty yarn in satin and tapestry weaves. 1958–1963. 1964-35-36 through -3945. Six samples of material for screen or wall covering
Wool, linen, synthetic fibers, glass, aluminum, copper, straw and wire. 1958–1963. 1964-35-40 through -45*

BARBRO NILSSON (Sweden)

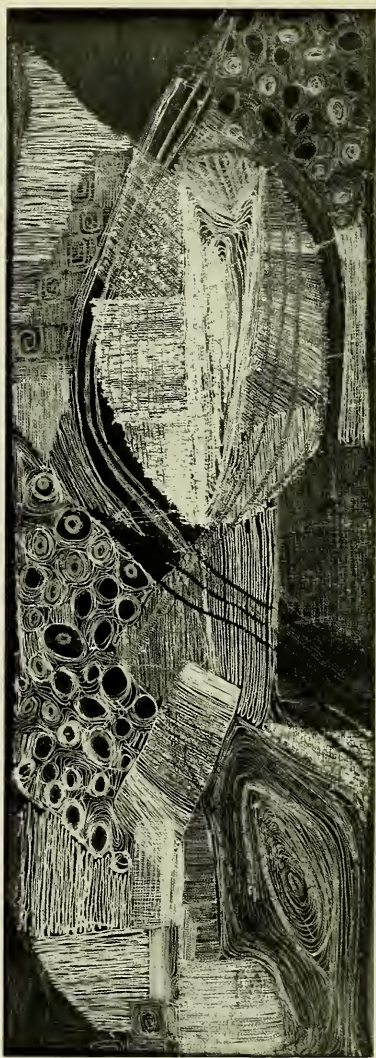
46. Hanging, YELLOW OVIDS
Wool in tapestry weave, in yellow, white, grey and green. 1950–1960. 1964-24-42



No. 47



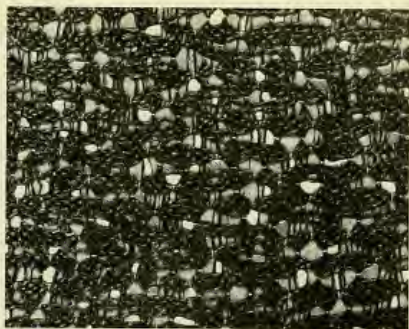
No. 48 (detail)



No. 49



No. 55A



No. 57 (detail)

47. Rug sample, YELLOW OVOIDS*

Wool and linen, tapestry weave in yellow, white, grey and green. 1950-1960. 1964-24-43

MARIANNE RICHTER (Sweden)

48. Hanging, MOTLEY BIRDS*

Wool, slit tapestry weave in various colors. About 1960. 1964-24-44

FRANCES ROBINSON (United States)

49. Panel*

Black silk, machine embroidered in white, pale blue, brown and purple; abstract design of circles, ovals, and oblong shapes. 1962. 1964-35-1

50. Place mat

Pale blue linen, appliqué border, machine embroidered in colors. 1962. 1964-35-4

51. Round pillow

Cotton, appliqué pattern, machine embroidered in various colors. 1962. 1964-35-3

52. Square pillow

Grey cotton, machine embroidered in black, white, grey and light brown; abstract design. 1962. 1964-35-5

ASTRID SAMPE (Sweden)

53. Place mat or napkin, LINNEA

Linen damask in white and cream color. About 1960. 1964-24-33

54. Napkins

White linen damask. About 1960. 1964-24-34 A and B

55. Place mats with designs from medieval Swedish seals; woven for the Swedish Pavilion at the New York World's Fair, 1964. Linen damask in light brown and white. 1963-1964. 1964-24-35 A* through D

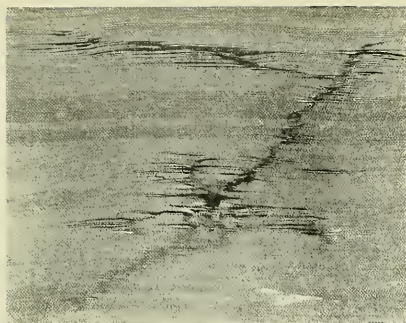
56. Table cloth and napkin

Linen damask in yellow and white. About 1956. 1964-24-63 A and B

KIRSTEN STRAND (Norway)

57. Table mat*

Dark blue linen embroidered with black and various colored linens. About 1964. 1964-24-52



No. 58

LENORE TAWNEY (*United States*)

58. Hanging, *SPRING THAW**

Linen, wool and goat's hair; tapestry weave in white and light shades of purple, blue and green. 1959-1960.

1964-24-64

59. Hanging, *VITAE*

Linen, wool and silk; open weave construction in white and shades of grey and light brown. 1959-1960.

1964-24-65

60. Hanging, *REFLECTIONS*

Linen, wool and rayon; tapestry weave in brilliant shades of red. 1959-1960.

1964-24-66

61. Demonstration piece

Linen, wool and silk; open weave construction in various colors. 1960.

1964-24-67

62. Demonstration piece

Linen, silk and wool; open weave construction in various colors. 1960.

1964-24-68

ANONYMOUS

63. Pincushion

White linen, embroidered in colored wools; design of tree with bird and dog; pins as part of pattern. Denmark. 1950-1950.

1964-35-11

ORIENTAL TEXTILES

With one exception, these are Japanese.

64. Lengths of materials for use in *yukatas*

Cotton, in dark blue, dark brown and white. 1950-1960.

1964-24-11 through -13

65. Lengths of materials for use in *yukatas*

Synthetic fibers and cotton, tabby weave, one black, one white. 1950-1960.

1964-24-14 and -24

66. Length for *kimono*

Silk, tabby weave, in shades of brown. 1950-1960.

1964-24-15

67. *Kimono* sleeve fragments

Silk and metal, embroidered and tie-dyed. 17th and 18th century.

1964-24-1 and -7

68. Fragment of *kimono*

Silk, natural dyes, ribbed; pattern achieved by pressing silk against wild grass and wood grain. 1950-1960.

1964-24-9

69. Lengths of materials for use in *obis*

Silk and metal, twill weave and brocading. Late 19th and 20th century.

1964-24-17, -18, -26, -27

70. Group of panels, made from *obi* materials

Silk and metal, tabby weave and brocading. Late 19th-early 20th century.

1964-24-19 through -23

71. Panel
Silk and metal, twill weave, in white, pale green and gold.
Late 18th century. 1964-24-8
72. Priest's robe
Silk and metal, satin weave, in shades of apricot, blue,
yellow and green; brocaded in gold. Late 18th-early 19th
century. 1964-24-5
73. Material for *zabuton* (floor cushions)
Raw silk, tabby weave, in gradations of violet. 1950-
1960. 1964-24-16
74. Fragment
Synthetic fibers and metal, tabby weave with brocaded
signature. 1950-1960. 1964-24-31
75. Hanging, *WARRIORS*
Silk and metal, *k'ô-ssu* (slit tapestry). China, 20th century.
1964-24-29
76. Hanging, *MOUNT FUJI AND DRAGONS*
Embroidered in silk; couching and laid work. 19th
century. 1964-24-30
77. Book, *THE JAPANESE ART OF KUSAKI-ZOME NIPPON
COLOURS*
By Akira Yamazaki; publ. Getumei-Kai, Kamakura,
Japan. 1959. 1964-24-2
78. Book, *NIPPON HAND WEAVES IN KUSAKI-ZOME
DYES*
By Akira Yamazaki; publ. Getumei-Kai, Kawasaki,
Japan. 1959. 1964-24-3

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